

Sheldon House  
336 Benefit Street  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-163

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
64-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-163

## SHELDON HOUSE

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RI,  
4-PROV,  
64-

Address: 336 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County,  
Rhode Island. Plat 16, Lot 76.

Present Owner: Arusha Corporation.

Present Occupants: Various tenants.

Present Use: Apartment house.

Brief Statement of Significance: This mid-nineteenth-century double house is an unusual example of Gothic Revival detail on College Hill.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1825 Edward S. Sheldon, Rosanna and Christopher and Audrey Sheldon sell for \$1800 to Nicholas Brown and Thomas P. Ives under name of Brown & Ives a certain lot of land with all buildings and thereon bounded - E by Benefit Street, W by grantors, S by Power Street, and N by Samuel Weeden, it being the estate formerly owned by the late Captain Edward Spalding. [Deed Book 48, page 301, in Providence City Hall]
- 1854 Taxed to Israel Sheldon heirs
- 1864 Heirs of Israel Sheldon sell to George R. Sheldon for \$6,250 and forever quit claim to him the sd. George R. Sheldon a certain lot of land bounded E by Benefit St., N by William Chandler, S by Power St., and W by heirs of T. P. Ives. [Deed Book 167, page 287, in Providence City Hall]
- 1865 George R. Sheldon sells to Edward B. Hall a certain lot of land with double house. [Deed Book 173, page 61, in Providence City Hall]
- 1872 Louisa J. Hale, widow, for \$17,500 sells to Moses R. I. Goddard, trustee u/w Moses B. Jenkins [Deed Book 199, page 291, in Providence City Hall] a certain lot of land "which was conveyed to me by George R. Sheldon" Bounded E by Benefit St., S by Power St., N by William Chandler, W by Robert Ives. [Deed Book 199, page 356, in Providence City Hall]

1872 Moses B. Jenkins Estate  
1896 " " " " R.I. H.T. Co., trustee  
1903 Alice H. Fox wife Austen G. and Anna A.C. Carter, Estate  
1920 A.C. Carter Estate  
1922 Alice H. Fox, wife, Austin G.  
1922 Russell R. Fray [Deed Book 627, page 337, in Providence City Hall]  
1923 William H. Hill  
1924 Ellen Camfield  
1929 Mary F. Camfield  
1939 Home Owners Loan Corp.  
1940 James J. Wynne & Alica M. Wynne, j.t.  
1948 Robert L. Walker Co.  
1956 Arusha Corp.

2. Date of erection: The date of erection is not entirely clear from the available documents. The house shown on this lot on the map of Providence prepared by Cushman and Walling in 1859 has a different shape from the present house, and is probably an earlier one. The double house mentioned in the deed of 1865 is probably the present one, and in that case the house would have been built for the Israel Sheldon heirs or for George R. Sheldon between 1859 and 1865.

B. Historical Events Connected with Structure: Edward B. Hall (1800-1866), who purchased the house in 1865, was a prominent Unitarian clergyman. [See The Biographical Cyclopedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island (Providence, 1881), pp. 154-155.]

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey  
for the Providence Preservation Society  
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## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a mid-nineteenth-century frame house. With pointed, arched doorways and elaborately carved bargeboards, it is one of the few domestic examples of the Gothic Revival in this part of Providence.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The house faces east and consists of three parts: the principal section runs north-south

with the front entrance on the long east side, and is about 40' x 25'; set back slightly and projecting to the north of the main section is a wing about 20' x 25'; projecting to the rear, or east, of the other two, making a T-shape, is a wing about 16' x 25'. All three sections are two-and-a-half stories high plus a cellar, which is at ground level at the rear.

2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Wall construction: Frame, covered with clapboards, with corner boards with heavy beaded edges. The corners of the first floor of the south end of the house are cut off on a diagonal forming a semi-hexagonal end, and where the second floor projects over the first at the corners it is supported on heavy wood brackets. A double belt course of flat boards separates the two stories.
4. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys with corbelled tops.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance in center on east front with similar secondary entrance at north end of east front. Panel doors with upper halves lighted. Shallow recessed doorways enframed with Tudor Gothic arches in wood.
  - b. Windows: Double-hung windows, six-light, four-light, and two-light sash. Bay window over main entrance, with hip roof. Window frames have wide facing boards with chamfered edges.
6. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Cross-shaped roof with gables on the east, north, and west ends, and a hip on the south end. Covered with asphalt shingles.
  - b. Eaves: Horizontal eaves have simple molded cornices. Raking eaves on gables have elaborate, perforated bargeboards.
  - c. Dormers: Small, hip-roofed dormers with wide four-light-over-four-light windows.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: First floor: front entrance hall with stairway, large parlor to the south, large room to the west, a row of four smaller rooms just north of the entrance hall, two larger rooms on the north side of the house. Second floor similar.

2. Stairways: U-shaped stairway behind front entrance hall, three straight runs with landings, heavy square newels with bell-shaped drops, turned balusters, molded rail, plain step ends.
  3. Flooring: Wood flooring, 2" wide boards.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
  5. Doors and windows: Panel doors; heavy molded and mitred door and window frames.
  6. Trim: Heavy molded plaster ceiling cornices, small ceiling medallions.
  7. Hardware: Butt hinges, silver-plated round knobs.
  8. Lighting: Electric.
  9. Heating: Fireplaces in many rooms, some with one-story marble mantels with heavy, carved, bracketed detail.
- D. Site: The house faces east on a small lot at the northwest corner of Benefit and Power Streets. The lot slopes down steeply to the west, with the cellar on the west opening to a small garden.

Prepared by Osmond R. Overby  
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